

The Arrangement of the Fruit of the Spirit

by Wayne Goff

Tim Young had an excellent talk Wednesday night on the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5). He pointed out some beautiful truths that should help all of us in our walk with God and in ordering our lives according to His Word. If you appreciate this article, then give Tim the credit.

The Fruit of the Spirit

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law” (Gal. 5:22–23).

If you notice, there are 9 attributes which God categorizes as “fruit of the Spirit.” They are placed in a unique and meaningful order which we should note:

- The first three deal with **our relationship with God: love, joy, peace**. When we obey the gospel and live according to God’s will, then we experience a wonderful relationship with Him that fills our hearts and souls with love, joy and peace.
- The second three deal with **our relationship with others: longsuffering, kindness, goodness**. The ability to be kind, good and patient with our brethren and with our fellow man is a direct result of letting the word of Christ dwell in us richly (Col. 3:17). Those who *claim* to love God and yet hate their brothers are liars and the truth is not in them (1 Jn. 4:20). It is the love and peace of God that allows us to love our neighbors as ourselves.
- The third three deal with **our relationship with self: faithfulness, gentleness, self-control**. The Lord’s disciple disciplines himself through these three things, which basically means he is a *loyal follower* of Jesus Christ (faithful), who recognizes his own station in life through a *meekness which implies humility* (gentleness), and is viewed by self and others through our *personal discipline* (self-control).

The *fruit of the Spirit* is obviously the practice of true religion wherein one loves **God** with all his heart and his **neighbor** as **himself** (Mk. 12:30).

The Foundation of Each Group

If this grouping of the fruit of the Spirit weren’t impressive enough, then consider that in each of the three groups **the first of the three is the foundation of that group:**

- In **our relationship with God** there **first** must be the presence of Divine *love* (agapé) in our hearts — the foundation. If we do not love God first and foremost, then there can be no joy and peace in our lives. Jesus explained that no man can serve two masters, for he will love the one and hate the other (Lk. 16:13). So we must choose to love God and so permeate our hearts and lives with that love. *“But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him”* (1 Jn. 2:5). Doing this, our hearts are filled with joy and peace (Rom. 14:17; 15:13).
- In **our relationship with others** there **first** must be *longsuffering* — the foundation. Kindness and goodness are the outpouring of the heart’s ability to suffer long. God is exceedingly longsuffering with us (Rom. 2:4; 9:22), and He instructs us to live our lives in peace by developing our own disposition of longsuffering toward others (Col. 3:12). *“Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering.”* God’s elect mimic God Himself (Matt. 5:44-45). *“But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.”* The definition of “longsuffering” helps us to see the connection with it to kindness and goodness. It is “*patient enduring of evil, fortitude*, Col. 1:11; Col. 3:12; 1 Tim. 1:16; 1 Pet. 3:20; *slowness of avenging injuries, long-suffering, forbearance, clemency*, Rom. 2:4; 9:22; 2 Cor. 6:6; Gal. 5:22; Eph. 4:2; 2 Tim. 4:2; James 5:10; *patient expectation*, 2 Tim. 3:10; Heb. 6:12; 2 Pet. 3:15” (Mounce Greek Dictionary).

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